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Many of us think that a hard hat is only required when working near the swing area of an overhead crane during bridge construction. However, this is not the case as a hard hat is required when working in low overhead clearance areas where there is a high risk of bumping your head and to protect from falling objects. A bump hat may suffice when a hard hat is not required, however bump hats are not ANSI or OSHA approved as they do not protect against falling objects.

OSHA states that a hard hat is required in order to prevent head injuries as they resist penetration by either falling or stationary objects, absorb shock caused by a blow to the head and shall be water resistant and slow to burn. These hats shall also be worn if an electrical hazard exists in the work zone. The hat label on the inside shall state the manufacturers name, the ANSI standard, type and class, the size and the date of manufacturing.

Type I hard hats provide protection to the top of the head and Type II hats protect the top and sides of the head. A Class G hard hat is rated for 2,200 volts of electricity and Class E hard hats protect up to 20,000 volts. A Class C hat provides no (0 volts) protection to electricity.

Hard hats do not have an expiration date however; it is a good policy to replace them with new ones at least once every 5 years. If you want protection from the sun or your own style, OSHA is now also approving a cowboy hat style of hard hat so check into this option too.

So, when you are replacing that little 18" metal culvert and you are standing in the trench under a backhoe bucket which is working near an overhead power line, be sure you have your hard hat on! Your employer and your family need you!

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